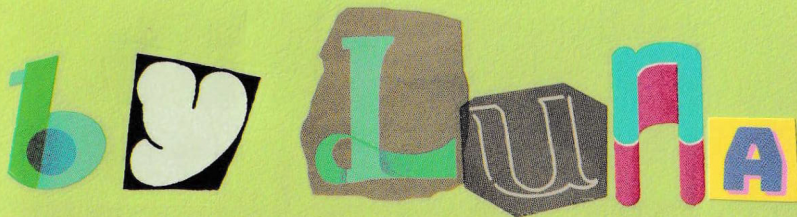




HACK THE SYSTEM!

HOW TO CHANGE YOUR

NAME & GENDER



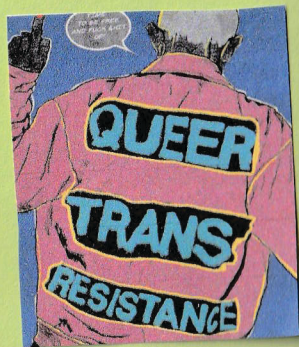
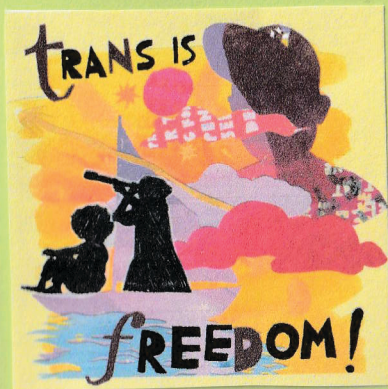
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WHY LISTEN TO ME?



i'm luna, a master of dealing with bureaucracy, which is why people rely on me. i went to law school, i have a law degree, i've never been a lawyer because i didn't want to be, i volunteered at a legal clinic, and i've helped friends change their name and/or gender. this is a powerful combination that makes me unafraid of doing whatever it takes to get things done.

i want to demystify the process so other non-lawyers can see it's really not a big deal and anyone can do this! the government wants to make it difficult but it doesn't have to be (though it's definitely a lengthy process. bureaucracy takes a long time.)





LOOK UP LOCAL RESOURCES

i start out by reaching to local LGBT centers and messaging them to see if they can assist with changing a person's name and/or gender. depending on what city and state you're in, i've either been connected to legal resources directly at the center or the center knew a lawyer who helps with this. you can also look into lawyers who do pro bono (FREE) work for LGBT people or other marginalized groups.

if connected with a lawyer, they will likely be from a legal clinic. each state has at least one clinic, and can have many for each region of the state, and these offer FREE legal support to people who have no or low income. you will do an intake with them where they will verify you meet this income threshold so your time is not wasted, and where they will verify what you need help with and get information necessary to provide the help.





GET A COURT ORDER



each state has its own requirements for changing your name and gender, which is why it's helpful having this free lawyer helping you. in california, you just need to petition the court for the name and gender change, pay/get a fee waiver, and then wait for your court date and the judge to approve it. you usually don't even need to show up to court for this.

in georgia, while you'll still petition the court and get the fee waiver, you also need to publish your name change in the newspaper for 4 consecutive weeks to put everyone on notice that you are changing your name for legitimate reasons and not to commit fraud. if you're trying to commit fraud, this would theoretically give people who read newspapers the time to reach out to the judge and tell them to put a stop to this. the lawyer will be able to put the notice in the newspaper on your behalf though! unfortunately when i helped my friend, the newspaper had no way to waive the fee for putting the notice, so i helped them and paid the fee. this is entirely dependent on the newspaper, but your lawyer will let you know. maybe they can find an alternative newspaper or find a way to pay the fee through the legal clinic's own funds. always ask!

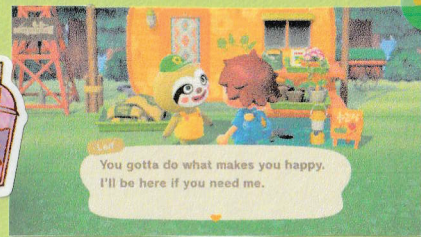
make sure you request several certified copies of the court order because you'll need them for updating other documents. it's always better to have more!

UPDATE BIRTH CERTIFICATE



once the court order has been approved and your name/gender has been changed, it's time to update everything else. if you worked with a lawyer, they'll give you papers on what you need to do afterward to update your name and you can ask them questions.

first, you'll have to update your birth certificate. if you were born in the USA, do an online search to find the office of vital records for whichever state you were born. they will tell you exactly what you need to do, such as filling out a form, writing a check, and including a copy of your state-issued ID in the mail to them. make sure that you follow the requirements for updating your name NOT DUE TO MARRIAGE. once you mail, either they will mail you your corrected birth certificate or a letter explaining what they need to process the change.



HOT TIP!

the biggest secret to mastering bureaucracy is getting good at harassing people but be polite about it! they're overworked and underpaid, so unless someone starts something with you first, don't be hostile. everyone takes their sweet time, forgets things, and either never follows up or takes much longer than they should. you're just there to be helpful in making sure you get what you need as quickly as is feasible.

this is why you must CALL them to check on the status of your applications always. this works for me every time, even outside name/gender changes. if you're top of mind for people, they will get to your stuff sooner.



UPDATE SOCIAL SECURITY

next, you need to update your social security info. there are two ways to update: an in-person appointment or by mail. i recommend the first option because it's safer for you so you don't lose any important documents, and you'll know if there's any issues or be able to explain things in the moment.

you would schedule an appointment with your local social security office and bring the following:

- your actual state ID (not a copy of it, your literal card)
- the original or a certified court order
- amended birth certificate
- SS-5 form (<https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ss-5.pdf>)

if you do mail, you have to send an application with original/certified documents to your local social security office as specified above. yes, this means you lose your driver's license/ID for at least a month. it would then take 7-10 mailing days for them to receive the application, then ~1 week for them to process, then mailing back so ~4 weeks total.



UPDATE IDENTIFICATION

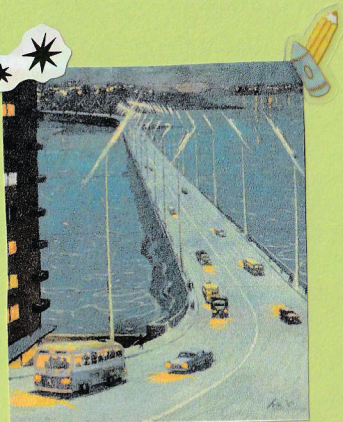
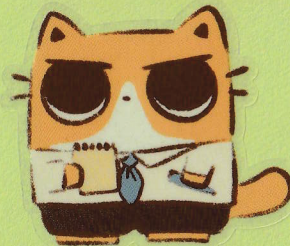
next, you have to update your state ID/driver's license. you'll again want to search the specific requirements your state has for name and gender changes. as far as i know, this must be done in person only where you have to fill out an application online, bring the original or a certified copy of the court order, a form of ID (your old ID, passport, etc. they'll specify), your new social security card, and 2 proofs of your residency in the state. PLEASE DOUBLE CHECK YOUR LOCAL REQUIREMENTS IN CASE THEY DIFFER!!!! then schedule your appointment at the DMV.



UPDATE EVERYTHING ELSE



now that you have your new ID/driver's license, you can update **EVERYTHING ELSE** in whatever order you want. these can be bank accounts, insurance, cell phone, utilities, passport, your job so you can get paid correctly, etc. anywhere your legal name is important, you gotta update because not having everything matching can come back to bite you later.



CELEBRATE! YOU DID IT!



i hope this all serves as a good starting point for you and your community to get what they need. if you have any advice, think i should add/remove something, or need help getting this done, please email me at pixelbruja@proton.me. i can't guarantee i'll be able to help you nor am i lawyer or able to give legal advice, but maybe i can point you in the right direction at least :)



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Luna is a nonbinary Puerto Rican + Russian Jewish person who loves helping others, video games, making things with their hands, photography, cats, design, rain, and cyberpunk and witchy worlds.

If you're able and would like to support the author (and their cat) with a donation, thank you so much!

Venmo: @pixelmisfit
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